

Item 3600-001-0001 Department of Fish and Game

2. Interim Reporting on Select Key Activities.

On or before January 10, 2007, Department shall provide a report to the Legislature (including budget and fiscal committees from both houses) on the budgeted activities for 2006-07 and 2007-08 the following program areas: (1) Department's enforcement program, (2) Marine Division, (3) land management and operations, (4) California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Section 1600 program activities, and (5) conservation planning activities. For each of these activities, the department shall include a description of the program, an estimate of the budgeted resources dedicated to the program in 2006-07 and 2007-08, and a discussion of the key, measurable objectives of the programs for 2006-07 and 2007-08.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:

FY 2006-07 -- Conservation Planning
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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Department's Conservation Planning Program consists of two main sub-programs: 1) regional conservation planning; and 2) mitigation/conservation banking. These two programs are statutorily mandated by the Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) Act (California Fish and Game Code Section 2800 et. seq.) and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Valley Wetlands Mitigation Banking Act (California Fish and Game Code Section 1775 et. seq.).

Program staff in Sacramento headquarters provides statewide policy development, oversight, and coordination for these activities. Program staff also provides permitting assistance for NCCPs and maintain a statewide mitigation and conservation banking database that tracks these banks and provides semi-annual reporting to the Legislature. Regional program staff is more directly involved in working with local applicants on specific plans and banks.

The use of NCCPs has significantly expanded in California in the last few years. More than thirty plans are now under development in five of the seven Department Regions (South Coast Region, Inland Deserts and Eastern Sierra

Region, Central Coast Region, San Joaquin Valley Southern Sierra Region, and the Sacramento Valley Central Sierra Region). At least two additional plans have the potential to become NCCPs.

BUDGETED RESOURCES

In FY 2005-06, the program spent approximately \$1,700,000 in 2005-06, primarily for 15.8 positions. Funding came from the following sources:

Fund Source	Positions	Dollars
General Fund	8.8	\$942,300
Environmental License Plate Fund	6.0	\$648,000
State Wildlife Grants	1.0	\$108,000
TOTAL	15.8	\$1,698,300

The recent augmentation of 7.3 new positions specifically for conservation planning has provided the regional conservation planning program with 23 positions and an annual budget of approximately \$2.5 million.

KEY MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES

Ten NCCP plans have been approved to date, in the South Coast and Inland Desert Eastern Sierra Regions and three additional plans have permits pending (Coachella Valley, Eastern Contra Costa County, and Rancho Palos Verdes). The Department has committed to provide significant resources to the implementation of these plans: land acquisition, adaptive management of Department lands in the reserve system, and biological and compliance monitoring.

It is expected that conservation planning efforts will continue at the same level in the next two years. This will include completed and permitted regional conservation plans throughout the state, which are collaborative efforts and dependent on the support and involvement of local government, private organizations and local landowners; consistent application of policy for conservation plans and mitigation/conservation banks; success in obtaining federal grant funds for conservation planning and land acquisition; and the protection of habitat at the ecosystem scale sufficient to ensure recovery of sensitive species.

Between July 2005 and September 2006, the Department conducted a compliance check on 28 wetland and conservation banks. Compliance checks were based on one or more of the following specific criteria, including but not limited to: 1) the bank submitted an annual monitoring report which was reviewed by the Department's Regional Offices; 2) the bank has an established

endowment fund held by the Department for which mitigation account reports are issued and reviewed twice a year; or 3) the bank has submitted a proposal for amending their bank agreement (triggering a review of existing bank operations). The number of easements currently held by the Department is reflected in the following table, by Region:

Department Region	# of Conservation Easements
1 - Northern California	28
2 - Sacramento Valley-Central Sierra	75
3 - Central Coast Region	106
4 - Southern Sierra and San Joaquin	23
5 - South Coast Region	26
6 - Eastern Sierra and Inland Deserts Region	17
Total	275

Since July 2005, fifty-eight (58) conservation easements totaling 27,978 acres were monitored by the Department's Regional staff. It is expected that mitigation banking efforts will continue at the same levels over the next two years and will include the timely review and processing of banking agreements, including compliance checking, the timely review, processing, and recording of conservation easements.